

THE WILSON BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT JONES has just announced that the dates for the annual meeting at Des Moines, Iowa, will be Friday and Saturday, December 27 and 28. This will be the beginning of a week of scientific meetings in this city. About thirty societies, representing all of the sciences, will hold sessions from the 27th to January 2. Many public lectures will be given. Our W. O. C. meeting is a very small affair in this big scientific gathering; but we draw our own crowd, and our meeting is as large, or larger, than when held independently. We hope for a full attendance of bird students from Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri, and states still farther west. Plan to attend and present something on the program, even if only five minutes long. Remember that the trip back home from this meeting will cost only one-half the regular fare if you secure the certificate from the agent at time of buying the one-way ticket to Des Moines. Further details will be given in the Secretary's letter.

THE COLORED PLATE of the Harris's Sparrow in this issue is presented to the WILSON BULLETIN by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, in part from its treasury and in part through special contributions by its members for this purpose. It may be interesting to note that this one page of color costs almost as much as the other sixty-four pages of a regular issue. Our readers may also be interested to know that this same plate is to be used as one of the illustrations in the volume on the "Fringillidae of Nebraska," which is to be issued as a part of the "Birds of Nebraska." The latter work is to be issued in parts, and the first part on the Fringillidae will contain approximately 350 pages, will have an edition of 500 copies, and is expected to be ready for publication in 1931. The Union has accumulated money with which to finance the first part, and will use the proceeds from its sale to finance the second part, and so on. And finally, both organizations are deeply indebted to Mr. George Miksch Sutton, who is rapidly taking a place in the front row of American bird artists. The WILSON BULLETIN is his admirer and debtor. Mr. Sutton is, probably, by this time settled on South Hampton Island, at the north end of Hudson Bay, where he expects to remain until the summer of 1930.

DURING the past year or so a number of members have allowed their memberships to lapse, and they may have failed to receive certain numbers of the

WILSON BULLETIN. Where such members have re-instated themselves they may receive any lacking numbers by making request to the Editor. The latter has no means of knowing at the time of re-instatement how many BULLETINS may have been missed.

WE WOULD LIKE to take a little space at this time to congratulate our colleague, the Editor of the *Oologist*, on passing the twentieth year of service. We are glad he told us about it in the August issue. Science is impersonal, but scientists need not be wholly so. When a man remains twenty years on a job for the good of the cause, he naturally would appreciate a little recognition—and possibly, thanks. This little 24-page monthly magazine, the *Oologist*, has undoubtedly served a constituency that could not possibly have been satisfied by any other current publication. The fact that it has survived is proof that it was needed and appreciated. It has published to the world plenty of good ornithological matter, and we trust that it may long continue to do so. We congratulate Editor Barnes on his loyalty and his record.

THE *Condor* for July, 1929, contains an interesting general article by Professor Wm. E. Ritter, of the University of California, entitled "An Untilled Field for a Revised Kind of Research in Zoology." Dr. Ritter's plea, as we understand it, is for more work on animal behavior, with special reference to birds. He admits that some work along this line has been, and is being, done. He says, "The truth is, a great deal of excellent research is being done of the general sort I am longing to see more of. But here is the queer thing about it: What is being done is done largely by amateurs—by persons, that is, who have little or no standing among the scientifically elect."

We regret that Dr. Ritter did not define more definitely the term "scientifically elect." We hope that the venerable professor has not inadvertently fallen into the aristocratic belief that all scientific discoveries must be made by the elect. We prefer to think of science as democratic; and that the discovery of a new fact, if proved, will be willingly accepted no matter whether the discoverer belongs to this or that research society. Perhaps, after all, Dr. Ritter merely wishes to say that he would like to see a greater number of scientifically trained men engaged in field work on the problems of animal behavior. To which we can say, "Yes, indeed, Doctor."

THERE IS NOW under way a very powerful movement to plant Ring-necked Pheasants, and possibly Hungarian Partridges, in suitable areas throughout the country. This effort is being fostered by the manufacturers of arms and ammunition. They are working openly and above-board. They frankly wish to increase the game in order to develop hunting for profit.

A survey has already been conducted or projected in a few mid-western states (Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, and Mississippi) to determine 1) the status of game birds, 2) the land practice affecting game environment, 3) public sentiment and organization, 4) game administration, 5) game research. This Game Survey program also includes some proposed study of the Bob-white problem. The important question for bird lovers to consider at the outset of this

program of game farming activity is whether it is desirable to supplant our native birds with foreign ones.

Before any concerted effort in behalf of bird protection can be again undertaken, new declarations and alignments will have to be made and appraised. The last great piece of federal legislation in behalf of bird life, which was passed by Congress early in 1929, was sponsored chiefly by Dr. Hornaday and a section of sportsmen headed by *Forest and Stream* and *Outdoor Life*. It is our understanding and belief that the National Association of Audubon Societies had the misfortune to be aligned with the opponents of this greatest piece of bird protection legislation ever enacted, with the possible exception of the Migratory Bird Law. So we believe that a new alignment in bird protection leadership must develop in the next few years.

DURING JULY of this year a small pamphlet entitled "A Crisis in Conservation" came to our desk. This pamphlet gives us a list of extinct birds (merely as a starter), a list of those on the verge of extinction, and still others that may yet be saved, etc. The pamphlet is a splendid one, and says many things that need to be said. We hope that every one of our readers who is interested in conservation of wild life, bird protection, etc., will secure one of these pamphlets and read it. We believe, however, that this pamphlet is a little too hard on the sportsman. Perhaps the sportsman is motivated in much of his conservation work by the desire to have better hunting. While this is probably true we should bear in mind that it was not the Audubon Societies that fought and labored successfully for the passage in Congress of the Migratory Bird Refuge Bill* with its appropriation of millions for bird protection. The Audubon Societies were committed to a policy of public shooting grounds instead of inviolate sanctuaries. The men who fought the fight for inviolate sanctuaries for bird life would probably be classified as sportsmen. Of course there was a division among sportsmen—some wanted the public shooting grounds. And yet the federal act for inviolate sanctuaries was pushed to a successful conclusion by a group of sportsmen rather than by Audubonites, and we feel it our duty to pay our respects to these men.

This pamphlet also takes a dig at the "prosperous ornithological clubs for the scientific study of birds, and scientific institutions" for their indifference to the cause of bird protection. Of course, if the word "prosperous" had been left out we might have felt ourselves included in this arraignment. As it is we can only wish more power to the critics. As we see it, it is the solemn duty of zoologists and ornithologists (professionals and amateurs of course) to do the utmost to save from extinction the materials upon which their sciences are based. If we are remiss in this obligation we deserve all the condemnation that will come now and hereafter.

Reverting now to another point. We believe that prevention of extermination or close approach to extermination is the big principle in bird protection. We do not shed tears over the death of a bird. We do not hold that every last bird should be saved. We are perfectly well satisfied with the idea of

*Also called the "Migratory Bird Conservation Act," or the "Norbeck-Andresen Bird Sanctuary Bill."

conservation. We are perfectly willing that proper game birds should be hunted for sport under proper restrictions that will insure the perpetuity or conservation of the race. And we would much rather see sportsmen interested in the preservation of species for the sport of hunting than to have to witness the importation of exotic birds to take the places of our native birds. These are, of course, individual opinions. We think that every organization, scientific or otherwise, which deals with any form of wild life, birds for instance, ought to adopt a platform which would set forth to the world a statement of its beliefs and policies toward, and with respect to, wild life, birds for instance. We wish the W. O. C. had such a platform. We would be glad to see a definite platform of the National Association of Audubon Societies. Perhaps other ornithological societies have such a statement of principles which we have overlooked. Agreement on a policy, if it is a good one, will help much to make any organization a real force in wild life conservation.

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1. War is still a possibility.
 2. Every nation is in danger of war.
 3. The United States is in danger of war.
 4. The United States should be prepared to defend herself in war.
 5. Arms and ammunition are necessary in war and national defense.
 6. The United States should maintain arms and ammunition resources for national defense.
 7. Since arms and ammunition are produced by private industry, these industries must be encouraged by the government and the people.
 8. Such industries may be encouraged by the public use of arms and ammunition.
 9. The only legitimate public use of arms and ammunition is in hunting and killing wild animals.
 10. Therefore, it is a patriotic duty to encourage the hunting and killing of wild animals; to oppose restrictive game laws; to encourage the importation of foreign species of game birds in substitution for the disappearing native game birds, in order to provide abundance of hunting and encourage the manufacture of ammunition, etc.

This is the gist of an informal argument we heard not long since, though we may have stated the conclusions a little more broadly and emphatically. Where is the fallacy in the logic? Our own belief is that we can have both preparedness and wild life protection, and that there is no essential relation between the two problems.